

BEYOND PROMISES

June 21, 1996 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -

In a recent article we noted that the Promise Keepers movement is not resisted only by Fundamentalists, but by many Evangelicals as well. (The term "Evangelical" can mean almost anything today; we use it here merely to differentiate certain men who stand for doctrines such as the perfection and sufficiency of Scripture and the perfect and sufficient Atonement of Jesus Christ, but who are not Fundamentalists.) A case in point is the newly published book *Beyond Promises: A Biblical Challenge to Promise Keepers*, by David Hagopian and Douglas Wilson (1996, 268 p., Canon Press, Moscow Idaho). Hagopian is a California lawyer who has written a book entitled *"Back to Basics: Rediscovering the richness of the Reformed Faith"* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1996). Wilson is the pastor of Community Evangelical Fellowship in Moscow, Idaho. He contributed to Hagopian's book on Reformed doctrine. The cover jacket to *Beyond Promises* contains recommendations by John MacArthur, John Armstrong, R.C. Sproul, Jr., and Don Matzat.

While we certainly do not recommend the ministries of any of these men, and while this book does not go far enough in its criticism of Promise Keepers, in our estimation, it is still a helpful book, particularly for those who reject, automatically, anything written by a Fundamentalist or a Bible-believing Baptist. We would call attention to two of the chapters from the book.

Chapter five is entitled "The Tower of Psychobabble." The authors describe the danger of the "Christian psychology" promoted by many Promise Keepers writers and speakers. "Though Promise Keepers was not the principal architect of the Tower of Psychobabble, it has, from its inception, joined itself to the construction crew. To be sure, some Promise Keepers authors and speakers have had enough theological acumen to sense that the construction crew may not be building a truly heavenly edifice. But even after offering the insight, they still unwittingly contribute to the overall effort. Robert Liparulo, for example, noted in *New Man* that 'secular psychology often clashes with biblical teachings,' but then, in the same breath, he recommends a book that psychologizes the book of Romans away" (p. 76).

Chapter fourteen is entitled "Breaking Down the Walls." The authors expose the Roman Catholic gospel as a perversion of the Gospel of the Grace of Jesus Christ, and then note: "Promise Keepers is treating the differences between Protestants and Catholics as just another 'denomination' difference. ... The issue is not individual Catholics, but rather, the formal stand taken by the institution of the Roman Catholic church itself, repudiating the gospel, and cursing those who understand and embrace it. Therefore, the duty of those Catholics who have come to saving faith is to leave that church as soon as they possibly can. Further, it is the duty of all confessing Protestants to encourage and aid them as they leave. The position taken by Promise Keepers is not merely that individual Catholics can be regenerate. If that were the issue, there would be no controversy. The problem is the formal position of the Catholic church, that of

repudiating the gospel, and the formal position of Promise Keepers accepting that church as a Christian church regardless" (pp. 229,230). [O Timothy Editor: Any Catholic who gets saved is saved in spite of Roman Catholic teaching, not because of it.]

The authors conclude the book with these words: "We need to turn from self and turn to Him. We need to get beyond ourselves--beyond promises--clinging to Him and His unbroken promises alone, trusting that by His grace, He will perfect the good work He began in us. We are not promise keepers. We are men of promise-men who rely not on our own promises, but on the only Promise Keeper who ever lived: the One who paid the price for each of our broken promises and kept all of His promises for us."